

Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing February 15, 2017
Testimony of Laura Doherty
UConn School of Dental Medicine, 2nd Year Student
Re: UConn Health Budget

Co-chairs, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, my name is Laura Doherty and I am a second year dental student at UConn Health, also pursuing a PhD in biomedical sciences. I am a resident of Farmington, Connecticut.

I am writing today to urge the committee to prevent damaging budget cuts to UConn Health. Maintaining the current level of funding for UConn Health is vital to keeping Connecticut at the forefront of healthcare and research, and especially for retaining physicians, dentists, and researchers in our state to promote and improve the health of our citizens.

I am not originally from Connecticut, but applied to the UConn School of Dental Medicine, as it is one of the only schools in the country that offers a combined DMD/PhD degree. This incredibly special program offers students like me, interested in advancing the fields of medicine and dental medicine, the ability to pursue both research and clinical training. Despite my acceptances into a number of extremely competitive dental schools across the country, I ultimately chose UConn Health based on the opportunity of strong research funding, combined with the presence of the Jackson Laboratory and the state's support of Bioscience Connecticut.

Budget cuts to UConn Health will directly affect my future plans as a dental scientist. My ultimate goal is to work in a dental school as a researcher and professor of dental medicine. If UConn cannot stay competitive among other institutions in terms of patient care, research, and overall funding and opportunities, I cannot see myself staying in Connecticut to pursue postgraduate education (whether that be residency or a post-doctoral fellowship). In the event of extreme budget cuts, I certainly cannot see myself as an employee of a Connecticut public institution following graduation; UConn is the only dental school in Connecticut, severely limiting my options once I receive my degrees. In order to pursue my goals to the fullest level I will be looking for opportunities at dental and medical schools in other states where funding remains strong and the opportunity for growth and achievements throughout my career is stable. UConn Health will not be able to attract the best possible professors and scientists if budget cuts continue to our institution; this absolutely will have an impact on the future of medicine, dental medicine, and scientific discovery in our state.

I urge the committee to consider the long-term effects of budget cuts to UConn Health on the residents of Connecticut and their future choices for physicians, dentists, and overarching health care. Thank you again for your ongoing support of UConn Health.

Sincerely,
Laura Doherty